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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**September 3, 2002**

### **Agents locate large marijuana cache in 18-wheel tractor/trailer loaded with vacuum cleaners**

Perhaps no one was more surprised than Border Patrol agents from the Alamogordo Border Patrol Checkpoint Station on NM Highway-54 when they discovered 1,289 pounds of marijuana hidden in boxes of upright vacuum cleaners in a tractor-trailer over the holiday weekend.

The seizure, which was made on Saturday at approximately 3:00 p.m., occurred when agents found 20 cardboard boxes--filled with 204 bundles of the green leafy substance--hidden among the appliance cargo. The substance later tested positive for marijuana, and is valued at more than \$1.3 million. Agents at the scene arrested a 35-year old male U.S. citizen from El Paso, Texas in connection with the incident.

Agents say the 1999 Peterbilt tractor-trailer approached the primary inspection lane of the U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint when agents noticed peculiar mannerisms being displayed by the driver. The agent then questioned him further with respect to his citizenship. During the questioning, the agent also noticed the billing ladle did not match up with cargo information on the vacuum cleaners. A canine search was then conducted on the vehicle that led to the contraband in the back portion of the trailer, totaling 1,289.78 pounds.

The driver of the trailer was placed under arrest and advised of his rights. U.S. Border Patrol agents contacted the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) who took the driver, the marijuana and the tractor-trailer into custody.

Record checks on the driver revealed no previous criminal history. The investigation on the incident will continue.

-- USBP --

*\*\*Digital Photos are available to all interested members of the media.*

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*For more information, contact El Paso Sector Public Affairs Office at (915) 834-8311*